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SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by the Caucasians United for Reparations and Emancipation (CURE/AFRE), a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31

[23 December 1999]

GE.00-10520 (E)

1. Silis Muhammad is the spiritual son of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad. He sojourns amid 40 million Black men and women in the United States of America whose foreparents were brought to the United States aboard slaveships. They were brought to America over 400 years ago. During the period of plantation slavery, they were forcibly denied the right to speak their "mother tongue".

2. Today, the lingering effects of plantation slavery deny us, the so-called African-Americans, the enjoyment of speaking our "mother tongue" in community with other members of our group. This inherent human right is set forth in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We, the so-called African-Americans, are charging the United States of America with the "denial" of the use of our "mother tongue".

3. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language".

4. We are human beings, but to this date and time we are denied the human right of speaking our "mother tongue": it was taken during slavery. The United States grants the right today for us to speak it. Then speak it, one might say. How can we speak what the United States has denied us the use of? If our "mother tongue" is taken away, aren't we denied the use of it? No! One may say, you are deprived the use of it; there is a difference. Is not to be deprived of the use of our "mother tongue" the same as being denied the use of it? No! Says the State, to be denied the use of it presupposes it is in your possession, while being deprived of its use presupposes it has been taken away. Well, since it has been taken away, we are both deprived and denied the use of it. The very act of taking our "mother tongue" away was for the express purpose of denying us the use of it. In fact, the act is tantamount to a gross and excessive permanent denial. The United States craved the denial of our use of it so strongly that it deprived us of the very instrument.

5. Thus, this will be viewed as a gross and an excessive act of denial of the United States to permit the so-called African-Americans to speak their "mother tongue" in community with other members of their group. While the act of the United States may be viewed as an act against humanity, equally so has the United States made itself responsible for the rights of minorities, within its jurisdiction, to not be denied the use of their own language, in community with other members of their group. We, the so-called African-American, cannot speak ours. The United States grossly denies us the right, having deprived us, continually, of the very instrument. And in its place, the United States continually has forced its Anglo-Saxon "mother tongue" upon us for the past 400 years. Absent our "mother tongue", we are a non-people: living in a state of civil death.

6. In addition, we are denied a permanent identity. Rent from our land in Africa, our roots, sold and forced into slavery: we have been recognized as slaves, Niggers, Negroes, Coloureds, Black Americans, and today we are the so-called African-Americans. While holding us in this ever-revolving state, the United States holds itself out as being in full compliance with article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Yet the United States

causes us to remain trapped within the Anglo-American culture regenerating its "mother tongue", in reality, its identity. One's "mother tongue" is the essential route to one's identity. It is the manner in which one's identity is passed from generation to generation and through which one's culture and religion flow.

7. Professor Guillaume Siemienski's working paper on "Education rights of minorities. Hague recommendations", states that language, but not just any language, one's "mother tongue", is intimately bound with identity. Absent exposure to our original tongue at the earliest possible stages in life and in primary and secondary levels of schooling, how could and can we speak it with other members of our community and preserve our individual identity? By forcibly stripping us of the use of our language and of the right to be educated in the same, the Government of the United States deracinated our collective identity, making our condition irreversible. We need special assistance.

8. While we are a People, and not a minority, in the United States we are placed within a minority status. Hence we call upon the United Nations to come to our succour under article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as the lingering annihilation of our "mother tongue" and the continual force, by the United States, imposed upon us to speak its Anglo-Saxon "mother tongue" at the earliest possible stages in our lives, is the continual extermination of both our individual and collective identity. Absent identity we do not have our own culture, absent culture we live, today, in a state of ongoing civil death: genocide. We are a people who are buried, politically. The United States has killed our human rights and has covered us over with its own, fraudulently, by trick and by duress. We were buried and hidden, so very much so the United Nations in making its laws has left us out, it seems: it is not known immediately where we fit. In the United States, we, the so-called African-Americans, mimic the human rights of the majority; but in reality, we are in the position of a minority, as every scholar knows.

9. In conclusion, we pray for compensation in the form of reparations. We ask that the United States pay reparations to the so-called African-Americans, since the United States cannot restore our "mother tongue" if ever it wanted to. Nor can the United States continue, illegally, to choose and force one upon us, which it has done for the last 400 years. The United States should be held liable, at least for the last 51 years, plus the additional years which are needed to resolve this issue. We ask that the United Nations place this reparation sanction upon the United States if the identity and language of minorities and Peoples are to be preserved. The precise dollar amount will not herein be stated, but will be presented when we are satisfied that the gravity of our argument, in the eyes of the United Nations, warrants it. Along with a dollar amount, we will ask for the release of a number of African-American human rights victims who have been unjustly incarcerated in federal and state penitentiaries. Finally, we ask that the United Nations impose a sanction on the United States in the form of exemption of all taxation upon our people for as long as this issue is in the hands of the United Nations.